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A

THIRD LETTER
TO
DR. NEW COME,
BISHOP OF WATERFORD,

ON THE
DURATION
OF OUR
SAVIOUR'S MINISTRY.

By JOSEPH PRIESTLEY, LL.D. F.R.S.

Multa renascentur quæ jam cecidere ; cadentque
Quæ nunc sunt in honore,-----

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E R R A T A.

IN THE FORMER LETTERS.

Page 45. line 4. for *eight* read *ten*.

70. l. 7. from the bottom, for 4th read 5th, and
for 5th, read 6th.

IN THE THIRD LETTER.

3. l. 12. for *viz.* read *and*.

5. l. 10. from the bottom, for *any* read *that*.

11. l. 2. read *the very country, or contiguous to it;*



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A
I. H. O. I. O. S.
T H I R D L E T T E R

T O T H E

B I S H O P O F W A T E R F O R D .

M Y L O R D ,

I AM equally struck with the *ingenuity* and the *candour* of your Lordship's reply to my last letter, and I am satisfied that in no other hands could the hypothesis you have adopted have appeared to more advantage. Still, however, I cannot help thinking, after the most attentive consideration, that what you have urged is far from invalidating what I advanced, and that, in several respects, it even affords additional support to my argument. The observations which I have made to this purpose, your Lordship's candour encourages me to propose with the same freedom with which we have both proceeded hitherto, making a point of being as brief as possible, and leaving those passages of your Lordship's letter on which I make no animadversion, to make what impression they may on our common readers.

B

S E C T I O N

SECTION I.

Of the testimony of the Christian Fathers.

IN order to be as little tiresome as possible, I shall say but little with respect to the testimony of the primitive christians. Your Lordship acknowledges, p. 12, a *prevalence* of my hypothesis in the primitive times, though not the *universality* of it; and this prevalence (especially so early as the opinion of our Lord's ministry not having extended much beyond *one year* may be traced) cannot, I think, be satisfactorily accounted for on the supposition of its having ever been the *universal* opinion, that he preached *three years and a half*.

Such an opinion as this last mentioned, could not have died away very suddenly. The apostles, and all those who conversed with our Lord, must have known how long he preached; and as their preaching consisted probably, for the most part, in relating the history of Christ, *notes of time* would necessarily mix with it, and this would continue the original tradition much later, I should think, than the time when the opinion that I contend for, is known to have prevailed. A departure from this opinion in *after times*, is not very difficult to account for; but that, in a matter of history and *tradition*, the erroneous opi-
nion

nion should be the *oldest* that we can find, is, certainly, not natural.

Your Lordship grants, p. 23, that the opinion I contend for may be traced to the year 150, and that the Alogi held it as well as the Valentinians. But the origin of the Alogi seems to have been in the remotest christian antiquity. Epiphanius, who gives a large account of them, does not pretend to give them any date; and as he found them without a name, it is most probable that in most respects, they were among the Gentiles what the Nazarenes were among the Jews, viz. the earliest converts to christianity. Opinions, therefore, universally held by them were most probably handed down to them (especially as few of them were learned) from the first promulgation of our religion.

You say, p. 7, "On a review of the passages
 " quoted from Origen and Eusebius, I doubt
 " whether there be that exact agreement between
 " your system and theirs which you suppose.
 " According to you there was the precise inter-
 " val of *a year*, between that passover, at which
 " Jesus first exercised his prophetic office in
 " Jerusalem, and that at which he was crucified.
 " But we cannot discover what space of time e-
 " lapsed, according to Origen and Eusebius, be-
 " tween the first passover and the imprisonment
 " of John the Baptist."

But, my Lord, as the antients, in general, say that the three first evangelists relate the events of

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one year only, and they all mention the baptism of Jesus, which was some time before the first passover, if any other passover intervened between this and that on which he suffered, they must have comprehended in their narrative *two years and a few months*. And though, speaking in a general way, *a year* may be extended to a few months more than a year, it cannot reasonably be interpreted to mean some months more than *two* years. If, as I suppose, the imprisonment of John happened within a fortnight after the first passover, the antient writers saying *a year* intervened between that event, and the next passover, is easily accounted for; the term *year* being a whole number, and within a few days of the truth.

Your Lordship says, p. 10, that “the progress
“ of the human mind is generally slow, and its
“ first attempts feeble on every nice subject.” But this, my Lord, is the case only in matters of *reasoning*, and would have applied here, if, without any previous tradition, or information concerning the subject, the four gospels had been put into mens’ hands, and they had been left to investigate the chronology of them as well as they could.

But this was far from being the case with the gospel history. When the evangelical writings appeared, the history of Christ was previously well known, so that the idea of the duration of his ministry would not be derived from those books.

books. The received opinion, whatever it was, had taken its rise long before. How this opinion should have been so very different, as your Lordship supposes, from the truth, must be accounted for on some other principle than "the slowness of the human mind in its investigations."

I do not see to what purpose your Lordship produces the authority of Grotius, and others, in favour of the hypothesis of *one year* having taken its rise from the interpretation of the passage in Isaiah, in which mention is made of *the acceptable year of the Lord*. Your Lordship's own opinion would weigh much more with me than theirs, because you have given more attention to the subject than they appear to have done. But it is *natural probability*, and not *authority*, that is of any weight here; and this, I think, is clearly in favour of the interpretation having been occasioned by the opinion, and not the opinion by the interpretation. Nor could Valentinus, with any face, have proposed such an interpretation of any prophecy, when he did not previously know, that it was supported by the *fact*, or was supposed to be so. His venturing on such an interpretation is, therefore, a proof of the current opinion being in favour of it.

You acknowledge, p. 29, that the primitive christian writers must have thought that our Lord's ministry was comprized within one year, unless they computed the years of Tiberius in a

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different manner from Luke. For it cannot be denied that they all reckoned his years from the death of Augustus. But can your Lordship think it probable, either that Luke should use a manner of computation different from that of all other chronologers and historians whatever, or that the primitive christians, conversant as they were with the evangelical writings, should use the same language with Luke, in what they knew to be a quite different sense; calling that the 15th of Tiberius, which they were satisfied would have been the 18th with Luke, and at the same time affix it to the same event? This I think in the highest degree improbable, and the authority of Le Clerc, Lardner, Pilkington, Macknight, Pearce, &c. with which you urge me, weighs nothing with me against it.

Because some of the christian fathers reckoned the year in which Augustus died, to him, and others to Tiberius, you say, p. 21, “ I may as
“ justly require an authority for this computa-
“ tion of Tiberius’s reign from the 1st of Janu-
“ ary, and not from the 19th of August, as you
“ demand an instance of reckoning his years from
“ his becoming colleague in the empire, and not
“ from the death of his predecessor.”

But, certainly, the difference of *three years* is a much more considerable thing than that of *three months*, and therefore may be more easily traced. In fact, however, your Lordship does not deny but that all historians and chronologers, without exception,

exception, date the years of Tiberius from the death of Augustus.

SECTION II.

Of the conduct of Luke in giving a date to the preaching of John the Baptist, &c.

I HAVE said that, the conduct of Luke, in giving a very circumstantial date to the beginning of our Lord's ministry, and leading his readers to conclude, from the course of his narrative, that his death took place in the year following, is hardly consistent with the supposition of three years having intervened between them. Such a mode of writing is, I say, unnatural.

But you say, page 32, that it is not *singular*; for that "Sallust has dated the beginning of the "Catilinarian conspiracy about the calends of "June, in the consulships of L. Cæsar, and C. "Figulus, and he has given no date to that more "remarkable event, the battle in which Catiline "fell. It should follow, therefore, by your "way of arguing, that the conspiracy was quashed "the year after it broke out. Yet the fact is "that this memorable defeat did not happen till "the beginning of the year following."

Now this appears to me to be a very imperfect parallel. All that can be said with respect to Sallust is that, being intent on relating a connected series of interesting events, he neglected

to mention the termination of one particular year, and carried his reader to the beginning of the next only, without any notice of it. But can your Lordship think that he would have done so, if the war had continued *three* years? Or was it indeed possible, that any cotemporary historian should have related transactions of that continuance without leaving some traces of their having extended to more than one year, which is the case with Luke. I therefore think that his conduct is a very considerable argument in favour of my hypothesis, and against that of your Lordship, notwithstanding this instance of Sallust.

I do not expect, as you seem to think, p. 35, that Luke should have written like a *regular annalist*, giving express dates to the events of every year; but I should expect that, having dated the beginning of his history with much greater precision than Sallust has done, he would not afterwards have related events of three years and a half, without giving some intimation, directly or indirectly, of his history having extended beyond one year. If it had had that extent, I think it would hardly have been possible for him, without very particular design, not to have left sufficient traces of it.

Besides, it should be considered, that the Roman historian had no other object but that of telling his story in the most pleasing and interesting manner, and therefore would more naturally pass by a date, if it interrupted the course of his narrative;

narrative ; as it would have done very remarkably in this particular case, when what he had related as having passed in the city, had so close a connection with what was passing in the field.

SECTION III.

Of the ignorance of Herod, and of other Jews, concerning Jesus, at the time of the death of John the Baptist.

YOUR Lordship candidly allows, p. 39, that the difficulty of accounting for Herod's ignorance concerning Jesus till after the death of John the Baptist is greater on your hypothesis than on mine, I supposing him not to have heard of Jesus till after a very *few weeks*, and your Lordship not till after *two years* ; but you say, " the defect of your argument is, that any conceivable method of accounting for Herod's ignorance may be the true one."

I think, however, that this case is so very particularly circumstanced, that there is hardly any conceivable method of accounting for it, and therefore that it nearly amounts to a demonstration of my hypothesis.

Your Lordship, finding that Herod could not be absent from his dominions in this interval on his expedition against Aretas, or at Rome, *for any political purpose*, as you first conjectured, now says, page 40, " a journey to Rome not undertaken

“ taken for a political purpose may have been un-
 “ noticed by the Jewish historian.” But can
 this be probable, when Josephus expressly says,
 that it was with difficulty that he was prevailed
 upon by his wife to go to Rome for the most im-
 portant political purpose, having conceived a great
 aversion to that court? and we have no account
 of any prince of those times going such a jour-
 ney for mere pleasure.

Besides, having quarrelled with Aretas by di-
 vorcing his daughter, and expecting a war on
 that account, it is not very probable that he
 would *then* think of a journey of pleasure, which
 would necessarily detain him so long from his own
 dominions. Princes seldom travel with expe-
 dition, and much less could they do so in those
 times. A year and four months, which your
 Lordship allows to the imprisonment of John,
 would, I should think, have hardly been suf-
 ficient for the purpose.

You also say that, “ though Herod was not
 “ actually engaged in an expedition against
 “ Aretas, he might be occupied on the eastern
 “ side of Jordan, in preparing for one;” ob-
 serving, p. 42, that this river “ seems to have
 “ been passable in a very few places.” But certain-
 ly this river, which is not so big as the Thames,
 cannot be impassable by boats in any place, and
 only *one* constant place of passage was quite suf-
 ficient for this purpose, which was not the passage
 of an army, but only the conveyance of a piece
 of

of news. Your Lordship will also consider that Peræa is the very country in which you suppose our Saviour to have made some considerable stay, so as to have made more disciples there than John did, before his journey to Galilee. Jesus, therefore, might have been heard of in that country, though no account should have been transmitted concerning him from Galilee. Besides, since this expedition against Aretas did not take place till after the death of John the Baptist, and probably that of our Saviour too, the preparation which you suppose he was then making for it must have been a considerable time before hand, and therefore could hardly engage much of his attention.

You observe, p. 39, that "Herod might neglect reports about a worker of miracles, from the commonness of such pretensions in those days." Now so far was it, as it appears to me, from such pretensions being common in those days, that I do not find the least trace of any such thing. From the time of Malachi there had not been a prophet, or even a pretender to the gift of prophecy, among the Jews; and John the Baptist, though a prophet, worked no miracle. Judas the Gaulonite, who set up the standard of liberty, did not, however, pretend to any miraculous power, and even near the siege of Jerusalem those impostors who deluded the people to their destruction, did it by *promises* only, of what they *would* do, and did not pretend to exhibit, or to have exhibited, any real

real miracle. Your Lordship allows, p. 106, that there had been a cessation of miraculous powers near five hundred years.

In the time of Herod, therefore, pretensions to miracles must have excited the greatest possible attention; and this would be more so in a nation whose ancestors had been accustomed to them, and from whom they had been withdrawn for so many years, than in any other nation in the world, or in any other circumstances of the same nation. This I consider as a great mark of the wisdom of God in preparing for the gospel dispensation, so as to make the evidence of it the most striking and illustrious possible. That, in these circumstances of the Jewish nation above all others, Herod, or any other Jew, the most negligent of his religion (and with respect to Herod himself I may almost say either *in*, or *out* of his country) should be two years without hearing of Jesus, is altogether incredible. But Herod does not only not appear to have been out of his country any part of this time, but was certainly in it *some* part of it, and we are informed gave particular attention to John the Baptist.

“Our Lord attended,” you say, p. 41, “on two feasts at Jerusalem before the fame of him reached Herod.” But your Lordship must have meant two *passovers*, without considering that there were three other feasts in the year on which the Jews of those times stately attended. According to your own Harmony, there must have been *seven* public festivals in that interval.

SECTION

SECTION IV.

*Of the interpolation of the word PASSEVER in
John vi, 4.*

I Acknowledge with your Lordship, that the word *παχα* is found in all our MSS. of John vi, 4. and even in Ammonius, which, not having the *Bibliotheca Patrum*, which you quote for it, p. 43, I was ignorant of before. But what is this compared with the weight of argument which I have produced, to prove that Irenæus could not have seen any such reading, and the great improbability that even Eusebius had seen it? They had just the same occasion for this word with your Lordship, their hypothesis equally requiring it; and the former, I doubt not, was much more eager in his controversy with the Valentinians than your Lordship is in this with me; and he professes to enumerate all the passovers at which our Lord attended in Jerusalem, merely for the sake of computing the years of his ministry. Would he, in this state of mind, have omitted any passover expressly mentioned by an evangelist, only because our Lord was not said to have attended at it?

If you say, as p. 48, "this writer might think it an *impiety* not to attend on such occasions, therefore might overlook a passover,

" at

“ at which our Lord was not said to attend,” he would certainly have presumed that he *had* attended, when the passover had really happened, and his attendance was only not expressed ; as, if the evangelist had said that he did *not* attend, it would have precluded this writer’s opinion of the impiety of such conduct. But this opinion of the impiety of not attending these festivals in Irenæus is merely conjectural, and I think very improbable.

On no account, therefore, can it be supposed that Irenæus would voluntarily have omitted the recital of this, or any passover, *expressly mentioned* by an evangelist, whether he thought our Lord had attended it, or not. On this I cannot help laying considerable stress, as I think it proves that, whatever be the case with all the MSS. now extant (which are all comparatively of late date) those in the time of Irenæus had not the word *παχα* in the place in question, and therefore that it was not in John’s original copy.

But your Lordship mentions another case which you think parallel to this. It was, it seems, p. 47, “ a constant opinion among the Fathers that “ Elias the Tishbite would make his appearance “ in person before the second coming of Christ,” and therefore that, arguing as I do, I must suppose, Matt. xvii, 12. in which our Lord says *I tell you Elias is already come*, to be spurious. Now really I do not perceive a shadow of parallelism in the two cases, because
these

these Fathers might very well think that John the Baptist might come *in the spirit and power of Elias* at the first coming of Christ, and that Elias might make his appearance *in person* at the second coming. This text, therefore, does by no means stand in the way of their opinion. But no person can see the express mention of *three passovers* in the course of our Lord's ministry, and entertain the opinion that it lasted only one year. This is an absolute *impossibility*, as your Lordship must feel, in making so much use of this text against my hypothesis; whereas, in the other case, there is no inconsistency at all. The opinion that Elias will come in person before the second coming of Christ is maintained by some persons at this day, who are far from thinking the text you have mentioned any objection to it.

The learned Dr. Burnet not only maintained the future coming of Elias in person, but even quotes in proof of it the very passage in the gospels that you think irreconcilable with it, *De Statu Mortuorum*, p. 395, and in another excellent work just published, and which I am confident your Lordship will read, as I have done, with great satisfaction, I find the same opinion and the same passage (Matt. xvii, 10...12.) quoted in support of it. See *Thoughts on the nature of the grand apostacy*, p. 176, by Mr. Taylor, rector of Crawley, &c.

It will hardly be wondered that, in p. 59, of my former letter, I did not understand why you supposed

supposed there would be any want of force in the observation mentioned John vii, 1. (*After these things Jesus walked in Galilee, for he would not walk in Jewry because the Jews sought to kill him*) if the word *passover* should be expunged from ch. vi. 4. For certainly the mention of the *feast of tabernacles* in the verse immediately following that in which his determination to continue in Galilee is spoken of, has a much nearer connection with that observation than the *pass-over* which was mentioned so long before; and it is just as much to the purpose. Nay, since the evangelist expressly refers to the feast of tabernacles on this occasion, a reference to another feast, which preceded it near half a year, is necessarily excluded. It was after every thing that is related in the sixth chapter that *Jesus's walking in Galilee*, in preference to Judea, is so much as mentioned.

SECTION V.

Of the transposition of the 5th and 6th chapters of the gospel of John.

I AM far from denying that the transposition of the 5th and 6th chapters of John's gospel is essential to my plan; but I contend that, though there is no MS. in this order, the thing is far from being in itself improbable, especially considering the manner in which books were antiently written, and that the connection is much more natural in the arrangement I propose than in the present.

Tatian, as your Lordship observes, p. 63, having transposed these chapters, does not indeed prove that he *found* them so transposed; but it shews that the improbability of their present order struck him as it did Mr. Mann, and those other modern critics whom your Lordship quotes. As to this transposition appearing, as you say, p. 64, "to Dr. Doddridge very unwarrantable and dangerous," I must be allowed to say, that I do not feel myself at all affected by it. Some persons *fear where no fear is*, and many affect more fear than they really have.

Your Lordship, I acknowledge, has helped the connection between the 5th and 6th chapters; but still it must be allowed to be more natural to

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say,

say, *After these things Jesus went over the sea of Galilee*, that is to the *eastern* side of it, after relating what had been transacted by him in the same country on the *western* side, than after what had passed in Jerusalem. And though the connection between the sixth and seventh chapters is mended by observing that Jesus *walking in Galilee*, more naturally follows an account of transactions in Galilee, than his *going into Galilee* would do; yet the whole verse (which is, *After these things Jesus walked in Galilee, for he would not walk in Jewry, because the Jews sought to kill him*) much more naturally follows an account of his being at Jerusalem, at the time that a conspiracy was formed against his life in that place; which account is found in the fifth chapter.

The only thing that your Lordship now particularly objects to my arrangement is, the reference to the *raising of the dead* before the miracles of the raising of Jairus's daughter and the widow's son; and yet when you consider what I say in favour of our Lord's referring to the *general resurrection* of all the dead, at the last day, and not to that of any *particular persons* in that time, you only say that the expression *may* refer to a particular resurrection. Admitting this, my interpretation is still left the more probable of the two.

The words, *and now is*, on which your Lordship lays so much stress, do not, when even literally interpreted, refer either backwards, to dead persons supposed to have been raised, or forwards, to
any

any that our Lord might intend to raise. But, of the two, I think they would rather refer to something that his audience *could understand*, than to something that they could *not* understand; that is, to something that was passed, rather than to any thing that was future. The word, *now*, in my opinion, very properly expresses the power our Lord had *in his then present state*, of which he had already given them a specimen, as a proof of his more eminent display of the same power hereafter.

Besides, all that my hypothesis wants in this case is, that the two chapters may be transposed without a manifest violation of the order of the history; so that were the present arrangement even the more natural, it would not overturn my argument. In this respect, therefore, I have been able to advance much more than I had any absolute occasion for; by shewing that the transposition of these chapters would make a more easy connection than the present.

In another place, p. 62, you say, "the connection of ch. vii, 1. is equally good whether it follows ch. v, or vi;" which makes nothing at all against me.

SECTION VI.

Of journeys supposed to be omitted in my harmony.

ON the subject of this section I have very little to add. Your Lordship will find that there is no journey that Jesus is ever said to have taken that I have not accounted for, and for which, I think, I have not allowed sufficient time.

The circuit mentioned Matt. ix. 35, and Mark vi. 6, in which our Lord visited Nazareth, and that mentioned by Luke viii. 1, in which he crossed the sea of Galilee, &c. were certainly different; and yet I do not apprehend that I have by this means, as you say, p. 67, “multiplied any difficulties on myself,” that I have not, in my own opinion, sufficiently cleared up.

If I have said, that “all our Lord’s journeys to Jerusalem were no more than *four*,” as you observe, p. 68, I must have overlooked one of the two passovers at the beginning or the end of the year. But this was an oversight that does not affect my hypothesis. I thank your Lordship for the notice of it, and I shall not fail to rectify it, if the work should be reprinted.

SECTION

VII.

Of the number of miles that Jesus has been supposed to travel per day.

I Complained of *unfairness* on this subject, because, after reciting the transactions which your Lordship says I comprize within the compass of fifty days, from the first passover to the following pentecost, you enumerate the journeys in that period; and in consequence of it, find that our Lord must have travelled at the rate of eight miles a day, including the sabbaths. What could be your Lordship's intention by this, but to represent *myself* as having made our Lord to travel at the rate of eight miles per day, for the space of fifty days together? For, certainly, you did not mean to represent him as having travelled at this rate on *your own* hypothesis; and I call the representation unfair, because *my* hypothesis does not suppose Jesus to have made all the journeys you mention, or to have extended them so far. But I am satisfied your Lordship did not advert to this circumstance, but only followed Mr. Whiston, who had treated Mr. Mann in the same manner, assuming his *time*, and including in it the *business* that *himself*, and not Mr. Mann, supposed to belong to it. To make the argument valid, it ought to have been in this

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form, " You suppose Jesus to have done this business in this time, and the time is not sufficient for it." As it now stands, it is, " I suppose our Lord to have done this business in the time that you mention, and the time is not sufficient, only because the business is more than *you* suppose to belong to it." When the argument is stated in this manner, it has certainly much less effect than Mr. Whiston meant it to have.

I do not see the force of what your Lordship observes in the last paragraph of this section. I reject the journey to Jerusalem which you speak of, because I suppose it not to have been made. But I see no reason why you should charge me with the journey thither, and not with the journey back again. I *do* mention that journey in its due place in my Calendar, and allow, as I think, sufficient time for it.

Having nothing material to observe with respect to the *eighth* section, I pass to

SECTION

SECTION IX.

Of the argument for the probable duration of our Saviour's ministry, from the objects of it.

ON the subject of this section your Lordship says, p. 28, "Nor can I persuade myself that our Lord had time enough, upon your plan, to *dwell* at Chorazin and Bethsaida, as he did at Capernaum;" and you refer to Matt. iv, 13. But in this place our Lord is only said to have dwelled at Capernaum, and not at either of the other towns; nor do I recollect that this is so much as hinted at, or supposed, by any evangelist. That Jesus *visited* these two places is certain, and I suppose he did it on his first excursion from Capernaum.

Whether our Lord's *proper business* was delivering moral instruction, or not, p. 79, is perhaps a controversy about words. I own he omitted no proper opportunity of doing it; but I conceive the great object of his mission to have been to give proof of his being the Messiah, and an example of a resurrection from the dead in his own person. However, in a sufficiently proper sense of the words, I have no objection to saying, with your Lordship, that every thing that Jesus did was his proper business. All was of great use, and worked to the same end.

SECTION X.

Of the transactions at the first Passover.

YOUR Lordship is very large on the subject of this section, especially on our Lord's having cleared the temple at this time, as well as at the last passover. But as this is of little consequence to my general hypothesis, and I do not think that you have invalidated what I before advanced on that subject, I shall not trouble your Lordship, or our readers, with many more remarks upon it. If our readers really think that you have answered my objections to the repetition of such a transaction as this, and which no evangelist says was repeated, I am satisfied. You grant, p. 91, that notwithstanding the differences you had noted in the several accounts of this transaction, "they may be harmonized." Our difference, therefore, on this subject, cannot be material.

You say, p. 93, your "grand argument is the difference of time." It is evident that in John's gospel, as it now stands, the transaction is placed in a different time; but then I object to this arrangement, and think, partly from the nature of the transaction, and partly from its being placed differently by all the other evangelists, that it is misplaced here, not perhaps by John himself (though this might have happened through

through inadvertence, being perhaps, composed after the rest of the gospel was written) but by some very early transcriber, or in whatever manner the fifth and sixth chapters of his gospel came to be transposed. It may be impossible, in many cases, to determine *how* a thing was done, though there may be reason enough to think that it was done.

You say, p. 96, "The silence of the three first evangelists on the early cleansing of the temple, may be accounted for by the just observation of the antients, that they begin the acts of our Lord's public ministry after John's imprisonment." But then it is natural to ask, why did they chuse to begin to relate the history of our Lord after the imprisonment of John, when so very remarkable and *public* a transaction as this preceded it? Besides, they all relate the history of John's preaching, and of Jesus being baptized by him. I therefore think it a strong argument against our Lord's cleansing the temple at this time, that the three first evangelists make no mention of it, the transaction being of so peculiarly striking a nature, and what must have been much more so at the opening of his ministry than at the close of it, where they have related it. In all cases it is more natural to relate any transaction the *first* time it happened, than the mere repetition of it afterwards.

I do not know that John the Baptist ever expressly called Jesus the Messiah; but I own he said

said what amounted to it, p. 86; as our Lord also sufficiently proved himself to be the Messiah without directly asserting it.

SECTION XI.

Of the stay that Jesus made in Judea, after the first passover.

I AM content to make very little reply to what your Lordship has observed on the subject of this section, thinking that what I have already advanced is sufficient for my purpose. You allow, p. 107, that "there was some difference in our Lord's manner of preaching when he departed into Galilee, which precise period certainly constitutes," you say, "an æra in our Lord's manner of preaching." And, though I cannot account for our Lord's being said to *begin* to preach on his arrival in Galilee, if he had preached *much* and *publicly* before (and none of the evangelists mention any particular instances of his preaching before) I do not deny that, in some sense or other, he must have instructed at least those who applied to him for that purpose; so that Nicodemus could with propriety call him a *teacher*. But his teaching must have been inconsiderable and private, to justify Matthew, Mark, and Luke, in passing it entirely over. And this is one reason why I think our Lord could not have made the *long stay* you suppose him to have made in Judea before his arrival

val in Galilee. I can, however, make a great allowance for his staying there, and making disciples too, if (which is very consistent with my hypothesis) this preaching and making disciples began some time before the passover.

I admit your Lordship's remarks at the beginning of this section to be very just, but words that have a relative meaning are applied with great latitude. Thus, when I said that the three first evangelists had omitted nothing that was *considerable* before their account of our Saviour's preaching in Galilee, I did not suppose that the testimony of John, and the other particulars which you mention, were in no sense of the word, *considerable*; for I think every particular in the gospel history to be truly so; but that our Lord had done nothing that was so striking, or that excited so much attention, as what is related after his arrival in Galilee.

I also admit, with your Lordship, that what John says, ch. iv, 45. proves that our Lord had reputation in Galilee before his journey thither; but it is expressly said to have been in consequence of what he had done *at the feast*, in *Jerusalem*, and therefore is very far from being any proof of his having done any thing very remarkable *in Judea afterwards*, which is the only question between us. And it is evident, from the accounts of all the evangelists, that the notice our Lord attracted afterwards, was unspeakably greater than what he had excited before.

SECTION

SECTION XII.

Of the Journey from Judea to Galilee.

I THINK it needless to observe any thing with respect to the subject of this section, except that, whether I justly infer from Luke xiii, 37, that the distance from Jerusalem to Galilee, was a journey of three days (which I still think to be the most natural interpretation) or not, the distance itself, which was only about sixty miles, does not admit of its having been more to persons who professedly undertook a journey, even on foot; and as our Lord set out from the neighbourhood of Jordan, and near to Samaria, he can hardly be supposed to have required so much time.

As the preaching of Jesus is expressly said to have *begun* after his arrival at Capernaum, I think it is not probable that he had preached much on his road thither, at least so much as could have protracted his journey any considerable time. Besides, I allow *six days* from his leaving Judea to his arrival at Capernaum; which, considering the little that we certainly know to have passed on the road, is abundantly sufficient for the purpose.

I do, indeed, suppose, that our Lord preached on his journey to the neighbourhood of Tyre, though nothing be said of it in the gospel history.

But

But then it should be considered, that it does not appear that he visited that country more than once; whereas he passed from Galilee to Judea, and back again, several times during the course of his ministry. As the great opening of the gospel appears to have been made after this arrival in Galilee, it is the less probable that he preached in his way thither at this particular time.

S E C T I O N XIII.

Whether Jesus visited Nazareth or Capernaum first.

AS a proof that our Lord visited Nazareth before his arrival at Capernaum, your Lordship urges several circumstances mentioned by Luke, that are not noticed by the other evangelists, as his reading in the prophet Isaiah, &c. but these are only *additional articles*, and not such *variations* as prove the visits to have been different; and I own that Luke's account of the transaction is by much the most circumstantial.

The argument on which your Lordship now lays the chief stress, p. 124, is that the visit to Nazareth related by Luke is followed by the same circumstances with respect to his arrival at Capernaum, with those related by Matthew and Mark, as his calling of Peter, &c.

I answer, that Matthew gives no account of any rejection of our Lord at Nazareth at the time

time that he is said to have *left Nazareth to go to Capernaum*; and as he certainly preached at the time of his rejection there, and even publicly in the synagogue, and with such very remarkable consequences, he would hardly have said, in his account of his arrival at Capernaum, only four verses afterwards, *From that time Jesus began to preach*. And Mark makes no mention at all of any arrival at Nazareth before he came to Capernaum.

Besides had our Lord been rejected twice at the same place, the thing was so very extraordinary, that it would hardly have passed unnoticed by the evangelists. We might, at least, expect some allusion to the first rejection, in their account of the second. Such conduct of our Lord would also seem to have been contrary to the instructions he gave to his apostles on their mission, Matt. x. *Whosoever shall not receive you, nor bear your words, when ye depart out of that house or city, shake off the dust of your feet*; which seems to imply, that they were not to preach to them any more.

What you call our Lord's *second visit* to Nazareth, mentioned by Matthew and Mark, is certainly related in a more advanced period of our Lord's ministry; but it does not therefore follow that there had been any preceding visit, and therefore that there were "two visits to Nazareth, p. 129, and two rejections there;" but only that Luke places the same rejection in one part of the history, and Matthew and Mark in another; and to the

the testimony of these two, I cannot help giving a decided preference. Besides, that this visit was, in fact, in a more advanced period of our Lord's ministry than where Luke places it, I think his own account affords a sufficient intimation, when he represents the Jews as saying (Luke iv, 3.) to him at that time, *Whatsoever we have heard done in Capernaum, do also here in thy country.* That all this should refer to a single miracle, wrought at Capernaum before our Lord himself had been there, I still think very improbable.

S E C T I O N XIV.

Of the Harmony of the Gospels according to the Antients, &c.

ON this I think it unnecessary to trouble our readers with any particular remarks; only wishing, as well as your Lordship, that our readers would apply your quotation from Lardner to my own attempt, as well as to your Lordship's. "I desire, p. 139; that the reader will
 " particularly apply it to my own attempt, lest,
 " in any place, I should have lessened the propriety or beauty of our Lord's actions or discourses by a wrong arrangement, or should
 " have led the theological student to a misconception of the length or progress of our
 " Lord's

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“ Lord’s ministry. Speaking of Tatian’s mis-
 “ takes, he, Dr. Lardner, says there is a re-
 “ spect due to the first attempts in any part of
 “ knowledge, nor are modern harmonists free
 “ from prejudged opinions; and I am appre-
 “ hensive that most of their harmonies likewise
 “ have need to be read with indulgence and cau-
 “ tion, as well as those of the antients.”

I would observe, however, that, in speaking of
 Epiphanius’s notion of our Lord’s preaching one
 year without opposition, and another in which he
 suffered much from their vexation and envy, you
 say, p. 136, “ Hence we learn how uncertain *tra-*
 “ *dition* is in these matters, and how little atten-
 “ tion is due to the sentiments of the early
 “ Christian writers on this subject.” But Epi-
 phanius who, lived in the year 400, was far from
 being an *early* writer. In his time *tradition* was
 altogether silent, and fanciful *speculation* had
 taken place of it. This is now to be corrected
 by sober criticism.

SECTION

SECTION XV.

MISCELLANEOUS OBSERVATIONS.

I. *Of the first excursion from Capernaum.*

I Still think a week sufficient for every thing that is *recorded* of our Lord's first excursion from Capernaum; and all that your Lordship now urges against it are such *general expressions* as I had considered before. I own, however, that, were there not other substantial reasons which make me conclude that this excursion was a short one, the general expressions would have led me to imagine that it had been longer. But the argument from these expressions, though certainly in favour of your Lordship's hypothesis, is, I think, abundantly overbalanced by others, which I have repeatedly urged.

III. *Of the second sabbath after the first.*

THE reason why I took it for granted that Jesus was in Galilee at the time that the disciples plucked the ears of corn, is that what is related by all the evangelists immediately before and after the transaction certainly passed in Galilee. I therefore think that an hypothesis which requires Jesus to have been in Galilee when it was hardly possible for him to have been there, and in general must have been absolutely impossible, on account of its nearness to the passover, cannot be

the true one. This, therefore, I think an insurmountable difficulty with respect to your Lordship's interpretation of the word *δυσσεως*. For my own part, I see so little reason for any of the interpretations that I have yet met with of that word, that I think other harmonizers would have done better, if they had paid no attention at all to any supposed derivation of it.

THE CONCLUSION.

IT is with the most amiable candour and frankness that your Lordship concludes with a sketch of the hypothesis of *two years and an half* for the duration of our Lord's ministry, and that you even mention some advantages of that scheme over your own. On this I would observe, that your distribution of our Lord's time, for the fifty days, between the first passover and the following pentecost, comprises all that is most difficult in my hypothesis; but that I think Herod's ignorance of Jesus is too long even upon this scheme. "Thus too," as you say, p. 150, "Herod heard of Jesus's fame a year sooner than I have supposed, yet not till Jesus had preached and wrought miracles in Galilee for near twelve months." This certainly makes the difficulty less than upon your Lordship's hypothesis, but still it is not, in my opinion, sufficiently within the bounds of probability.

I am happy that, in this letter, I have had no occasion to make use of any general principles, besides

sides those in which we are both agreed. Speaking of the *greenness* of the grass mentioned by Mark, at the time that our Lord fed the five thousand, you say, p. 52, "If you recur to the supposition that Mark was mistaken, you deny one of my first principles, and I cannot reason with you." But I see no great difficulty in supposing there might be green grass in the neighbourhood of a fresh water lake on the 13th of May, where I have placed this transaction, even in Judea.

I am sorry, however, that the admission of so trifling a mistake as this in an evangelical historian, who was no apostle, who says nothing about his *inspiration*, and whom we do not know to have been present, should affect any *first principle* with your Lordship; when I cannot help thinking that the supposition of so high a degree of inspiration, even with respect to the writings of the apostles themselves, is unfavourable to the proper evidence of christianity, as I think I have shewn in the preface to my *Harmony in Greek*, and also in my *Institutes of natural and revealed religion*.

But though we see this subject, and many others in very different lights, I hope we shall always cultivate what is of more value than the possession of any *truth*, viz. a spirit of christian *candour*; and that while we maintain what appears to us to be what christianity really is, and with the earnestness that we conceive it's importance authorizes, it

will be with that respect for the prejudices of others which christianity requires, and in such a manner, as that we shall not be ashamed if hereafter we should be found to have been in an error.

Upon the whole, I almost flatter myself, from your Lordship's most ingenuous disposition, which is apparent through the whole of this discussion, that when you consider the early prevalence of the opinion that our Lord's ministry did not much exceed one year; that this opinion was not that of the *learned* only, who might be misled by their speculations, but also of the *unlearned*, who had their information from uniform tradition; and the improbability of the interpretation of the *acceptable year* having been received so generally as it was, by many others besides the Valentinians, unless it had been countenanced by the received opinion on the subject, and indeed the impossibility of any interpretation of any text bearing down the *general belief* of an historical fact: when your Lordship shall consider how often it is asserted by the early christian writers, that Christ was crucified when the Gemini were consuls, and that this was the very year after that in which he was baptized, viz. the 15th of Tiberius, reckoning, as all historians and chronologers, without the least exception, compute them, viz. from the death of Augustus; when you consider the improbability of three evangelists leaving no trace whatever of our Lord's ministry having extended beyond one year,
and

and especially the conduct of Luke, in dating with so much exactness, the beginning of his history, and yet unavoidably leading his readers into a mistake of more than two years with respect to the conclusion of it: when you shall consider again the strange mistake not of Herod only (who, however, it is almost certain, was not out of his own dominions at the time, and they were no larger than one of our counties) but of many other Jews, even so late as the transfiguration, who thought that Jesus might be John risen from the dead, two years after they had both preached in public together: when, besides this, you consider with how much ease the whole business of the gospel history is comprized within one year, as appears by my Calendar; how little it was that our Lord had to do himself, and how much remained for the apostles to do afterwards, you will be satisfied that more time than I allow, would only embarrass and perplex the scheme.

Had unbelievers read the scriptures with so much attention as to have discovered the objections that I have urged to the received hypothesis, I cannot help thinking they would have represented the history as improbable in many respects.

When these considerations are weighed with the seriousness that they deserve, I think your Lordship will not make the difficulty you have hitherto done of expunging a single word from a place, where many learned critics, who were by

no means of my opinion on this subject, were convinced it had no business, and where I think I have almost demonstrated it was not to be found in the time of Irenæus, or of transposing a chapter to a situation in which it is hardly possible not to acknowledge it will make a better connexion than it does where it is now; and that you will not lay the great stress that you now do on general and indefinite expressions.

When your Lordship shall coolly consider all these things, I can hardly help persuading myself that, as we are not disputing for *victory*, but merely discussing a question of criticism for the sake of finding the *truth*, you will accede to my opinion, as it appears to me that there is so manifest a preponderancy of argument in favour of it. When I interrogate myself on the subject, I hope I can say with truth, that if your Lordship's arguments had made any impression on me I should have acknowledged it. I have, on several occasions, avowed a change of opinion both in philosophical and theological subjects; and I think it would have been with real pleasure that I should have owned myself convinced by your Lordship, with respect to this business. No person, however, can be quite sure of himself, but in the very same circumstances in which he has been tried before; and there are cases in which the strongest arguments, and the greatest minds, yield to the force of mere prejudice; so little, alas!

alas! are we, who boast of a rational nature, uniformly influenced by pure reason.

I think I have now noted every thing in your Lordship's reply that seemed to require it; and, willingly submitting the whole to the candour of your Lordship and of the public, I remain, with the greatest respect,

My Lord,

Your Lordship's

Most obedient humble Servant,

JOSEPH PRIESTLEY.

Birmingham, Aug. 10, 1781.

P O S T S C R I P T.

TWO of my learned friends having favoured me with some observations in support of what I had advanced, Section V. concerning *transpositions* in antient MSS. I give them here in extracts from their letters to me.

One of them, I recollected, had some years ago informed me, that he was pretty confident that *four lines* in Virgil had been transposed, though no MS. of that author indicated any such thing. Thinking the fact curious, and of some use to my purpose, I lately wrote to him on the subject, and he was so obliging as to give me the following answer. The other letter, relating chiefly to the scriptures, is still more to my purpose.

6th Aug. 1781.

- - - - - I DID not know that I had ever mentioned to you a transposition in Virgil's Eclogues, and had quite forgot that any such idea had passed through my mind. However, in the margin of my Virgil I have found a note that has revived them. The passage is in the 7th Eclogue

logue. The four lines from the 53d to the 56th, which are given to Corydon, I apprehend belong to Thyrsis, and should have been preceded by the four lines from the 56th to the 60th, which, in all the editions, as far as I know, follow them.

My reasons for this opinion are two. In the first place, *Aret ager vitio*, &c. suits better with the decent elegance of Corydon, and *Stant et juniperi*, &c. *jacent* (an antithesis that does not suit the style of Corydon) and *formosus Alexis* --- *videas et flumina sicca* (an unpleasant hyperbolical image ridiculing, as all along, the more grateful pictures of the opponent) agree far better with the drollery and libertinism of Thyrsis.

But besides this, in the next place, it deserves to be remarked, that from the 63d and 64th verses it appears that Phyllis (to whom Thyrsis opposes Lycidas in the 67th) is the same of Corydon, whence I infer that the stanza in which *Phyllidis nostræ* occurs, viz. before at v. 59, must have been Corydon's, not Thyrsis's; that is, that the two stanzas beginning the one with *Stant et juniperi*, the other with *Aret ager* have changed places. Transpose them back again, and you will get rid of some impropriety and confusion.

I might add a third reason for giving the stanza, *Stant et*, &c. to Thyrsis, viz. that from the opposition of *Formosus Lycidas* in the last stanza, to Phyllis, there arises a probability that the *formosus Alexis*, was put by the same speaker in an opposition of the same kind.

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11th August, 1781.

THE evidence which you have produced for proving the word *ταχα*, in John vi. 4, to be an interpolation, seems to me to amount almost to demonstration. And for the reasons offered by Mr. Mann, and you, I have little doubt but that the 6th chapter of St. John hath been transposed, and ought immediately to follow the 4th chapter. You rightly observe in your second letter, p. 71, "That transpositions are common things, and that the sacred writings are by no means exempt from them;" but you have given no instances of transpositions in any ancient writings. Your argument would, I think, be greatly strengthened by a fair representation of some facts of this kind. Dr. Kennicott, in the 22d and 23d sections of his most excellent *Dissertatio Generalis*, at the end of his Hebrew Bible, lately published, hath mentioned several remarkable transpositions which have been made in different parts of the Old Testament. The ten first verses of the 30th chapter of Exodus have, he observes, been certainly removed from the end of the 26th chapter, and of this transposition, no person, who gives due attention to the reasons offered by Dr. Kennicott, can entertain the least doubt, although it must have been made, not only before all the Hebrew MSS. now extant, but also, as it seems, before

before the version of the LXX; i. e. before the year 280 before Christ. That this transposition hath been made is sufficiently clear from circumstances: but it happens that there is direct evidence of the fact, for those ten verses are in their proper place between the 35th and 36th verses of the 26th chapter in the Samaritan Pentateuch, which, however, was not seen in Europe till the beginning of the last century.

Dr. Kennicott, in the catalogue of the Hebrew MSS. examined for his work, describes one of the Pentateuch, No. 7, which belongs to the Bodleian library, and consists of three large rolls. Between the first and second rolls, two skins of vellum, containing Exod. xii. 38. -----xvii. 9, are omitted, which two skins are found in a separate roll, sewed together in such a manner that seventy-five verses, viz. Exod. xiv. 28.-----xvii. 9, stand before Exod. xii. 38.-----xiv. 28. This fact is also noticed by Dr. Kennicott, in his second Dissertation on the Hebrew text, p. 571, 572, and it shews very clearly how the transposition for which you contend, might be made by an improper conjunction of the skins of an antient MS.

Another very remarkable transposition I will mention, which hath certainly happened in Novatian's book, *De Regula Fidei*. This book consists of thirty-one chapters; and it was so evident from the connection of the sense, that eight of these chapters were misplaced in the
old

old editions, that Mr. Welchman, in 1724, and Mr. Jackson, in 1728, thought themselves justified in rectifying the mistake, without the authority of a single MS. See Jackson's edition: p. 106, and pref. p. 25, and his reply to Waterland, p. 492.

These things have occurred to me as material to your argument; and you will be pleased to consider, whether it may not be right for you to give these or some other examples of transpositions actually made in ancient writings.

As to Mark ii. 1, I will only observe, that in the Vulgate, printed at Venice, in Folio, in 1478, the reading is, *Post Dies octo*, and that in Wickliff's New Testament, which is a translation from the Latin Vulgate, it is, *Aftir eyghte Daies*.



